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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

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to reactivate the operation, to renew the attempt, until after I had left the Agency, which was in February 1962.

Senator Mondale. Now, you say you discussed probably with Bundy and Rostow the capability in developing more capability of assassinations. And you may have discussed it in the context of various potential targets without deciding on them. Once you decided on a target, or you were going to recommend a target, what was the process of getting clearance?

Mr. Bissell. I can't answer you that, simply because no specific target was ever recommended. And to the best of my knowledge and belief, other than the case we have discussed at length of Castro, which in time preceded the SRRIFLE project. The issue of obtaining clearance never arose. I can speculate on how that would have worked if you wish.

Senator Mondale. No.

The Chairman. Let's go ahead then with the questions.

Mr. Schwarz. Senator Baker asked, did Helms succeed you?

Mr. Bissell. That is correct.

Mr. Schwarz. Did you turn over SRRIFLE to him and did you tell him about it?

Mr. Bissell. I believe I did. And I also believe that Mr. Harvey told him about it promptly after the turnover.

Mr. Schwarz. Do you know a man called Justin O'Donnell?

Mr. Bissell. Yes, I do.

Mr. Schwarz. Did you ask him in words or substance to kill Mr. Lumumba?

Mr. Bissell. I asked him to investigate the possibility and to make explanation for so doing.

Mr. Schwarz. When did you do that?

Mr. Bissell. I don't remember the date of that. I may have it on a chronology here, but I imagine that is a matter of record, or that he has testified to that date. I don't remember the date.

Mr.Schwarz. Did you tell him this connection with making plans to go see the passer of the poison, Mr. Gottlieb?

Mr. Bissell. I think I probably did.

Mr. Schwarz. Did he tell you he wouldn't do it?

Mr. Bissell. Later he told me that he didn't want to do it. But he also said that he thought it was an inappropriate action, and that the desired object could be accomplished better in other ways.

Mr. Schwarz. Who authorized you to tell Mr. O'Donnell to take steps to move toward assassinating Mr. Lumumba?

Mr. Bissell. Nobody.

Mr. Schwarz. Did you inform the White House of that?

Mr. Bissell. No.

Mr. Schwarz. To the best of your knowledge, did anybody inform the White House of that?

Mr. Bissell. To the best of my knowledge, no.

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Mr. Schwarz. Why did you seek to assassinate Mr. Lumumba?

Mr. Bissell. I didn't seek to assassinate him. I told a member of the clandestine service to make plans and develop the capability so to do if it were approved and ordered.

Senator Goldwater. Approved by who?

Mr. Bissell. It would have then had to have approval at the highest level of government.

The Chairman. Where did the idea come from?

Mr. Bissell. I don't remember, Mr. Chairman. It could possibly have been mine.

The Chairman. It could possibly have been yours?

Mr. Schwarz. Did you tell Rostow that was your initiative?

Mr. Bissell. I told him that the instruction as to O'Donnell was my initiative.

Senator Baker. How many others did you plan on, just as a contingency?

How many other people did you instruct to draw up plans to assassinate?

Mr. Bissell. I don't believe there were any others which went to the point of instructing that a man be prepared.

Senator Baker. How many were there that didn't go that far? How many murders did you contemplate?

Mr. Bissell. Well, Senator --

quoting a cable concerning the asset WIROGUE, who was sent to the Congo in the fall of 1960.

The Chairman. Mr. Bissell, the memorandum to which counsel has referred reads as follows:

"In recommending the agent or asset ROGUE, the Chief of Station, Leopoldville, the Chief of the Agency's African Division, probably Bronson Tweedy, wrote in late 1960:

'He is indeed aware of the precepts of right and wrong, but if he is given an assignment, which may be morally wrong in the eyes of the world, but necessary because his case officer ordered him to carry it out, then it is right, and he will dutifully undertake appropriate action for its execution without pangs of conscience. In a word, he can rationalize all actions'".

Is that fairly representative of the philosophy that applied to such matters at the time?

Mr. Bissell. Well, it certainly applied within the range of matters that would have come under SRRIFLE.

Could I say, Mr. Chairman, that I know of no way in which it is possible to operate a secret intelligence agency or a secret service unless it has at least a number of employees who are willing to and can be depended upon to carry out orders involving acts of this sort.

The Chairman. That assumes, of course, that the United States ought to assassinate foreign leaders.

meant to suggest that that was entirely comparable?

Mr. Bissell. It was not meant to suggest that it was entirely comparable, but the individual whom I have mentioned were all perceived in their time and place as menaces to their own countries and the U.S. interests.

Senator Goldwater. Might I ask a question based on his experience?

From my readings in trying to learn more about intelligence, I gathered the impression that the actions such as you have been describing up to and including assassination, are practiced by every intelligence organization that I have been studying, is that correct?

Mr.Bissell. That is my impression likewise, Senator.

Senator Goldwater. Including England?

Mr. Bissell. I believe so. In fact, I think definitely it has been used by MI6. I couldn't give you specific cases.

Senator Goldwater. Certainly KGB.

Mr. Bissell. Certainly the KGB -- although as, the Chairman pointed out the other day, I at least cannot point to any case where the KGB has carried out the assassination of a chief of state.

Senator Goldwater. Would you assume that in the cases of those other countries that this ruler would have knowledge of this in every case?

Mr.Bissell. In the case specifically of the U.K., I would answer in the affirmative. I also believe, however, that the Chief of the Intelligence Service of any one of those countries would flatly deny that the chief of state had knowledge of such action.

Senator Goldwater. Thank you.

Senator Baker. Would you deny it?

Mr. Bissell. In our case here?

Senator Baker. Yes, sir.

Mr. Bissell. Yes, it would be appropriate to do so.

Senator Baker. Have you done so?

Mr. Bissell. I have not had occasion to, because I am unaware of any high level assassination that occurred by the U.S.

Senator Baker. Doesn't that amount to a denial?

Mr. Bissell. It is a denial that any has occurred, at least in the period that I am aware of.

Mr. Schwarz. Was your answer to Senator Baker meant to indicate that you would perjure yourself on this matter?

Mr. Bissell. It depends a little bit on the context. There are occasions when I would go a long way to protect the President of the United States from certain kinds of embarrassment.

Senator Baker. The question was, very simply, would you try to protect the President in such a case as you des-

cribed, MI6 or otherwise?

Mr.Bissell. I can conceive of so doing, Senator.

Senator Tower. May I pursue that just a moment further?

You might say one thing in sworn testimony before a committee like this, but say another thing publicly, is that what you mean?

Mr. Bissell. That is exactly what I mean.

The Chairman. Have you lied to this committee?

Mr. Bissell. No, sir.

The Chairman. Would you lie to this committee?

Mr. Bissell. No, sir.

Senator Tower. I think that distinction has to be made. I think I would have lied about the U-2 myself.

The Chairman. Shall we proceed with the questions?

Mr. Schwarz. The remaining topic I have is Trujillo. It is respectfully indicated, and involves a lot of documents. And we have some procedural matters that we need to take up. I know we can't finish Trujillo before 12:30, and I would suggest that we ask the witness and whatever Senators that can return to come back this afternoon on Trujillo.

The Chairman. We have a Senate order that there will be no further committee meetings this afternoon.

I doubt that we can obtain unanimous consent.

ls

almost any kind of paramilitary operation, such as the Guatamalan operation, the Bay of Pigs itself is, the earlier operation that has been discussed in the press in Iran, and which resulted in the ouster of Mossedeg and the return of the Shah, there is an expectation that such operations will involve military or semimilitary action, and that some people will lose their lives in the process.

Senator Baker. Yes, but I am speaking rather more precisely of a single person or a group of people ~~who were~~ targeted, or discussions were held about targeting them, for what would be an assassination were it not for the legal significance of the term.

Mr. Bissell. I don't think I remember any cases in which that sort of matter was discussed or was the subject of planning, other than the ones which have already been mentioned in testimony.

Senator Mathias. Could I interject a question at this point.

But of course that contemplates what we have seen in the earlier testimony, that when you begin an operation -- and I think this was the history of the Castro operation -- to in some way incompacitate him politically, that it often moves to the extreme of incapacitating him physically, isn't that true?

Mr. Bissell. That is correct, sir.

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AFTERNOON SESSION

2:17

TESTIMONY OF RICHARD M. BISSELL (CON'D)

The Chairman. The hearing will come to order.

Mr. Schwarz will commence the questioning.

It will be understood that the oath still continues to apply.

Mr. Schwarz. Before we turn to Trujillo, two quick questions. [redacted]

Mr. Bissell. I have no recollection of that.

Mr. Schwarz. And if I took out any of the details and broke it apart you would have no recollection?

Mr. Bissell. I am afraid not.

Mr. Schwarz. And the second thing, to pin down on Mr. Helms, did you brief him about the Mafia matter?

Mr. Bissell. I am reasonably clear that I did not brief him in the early stages, that is to say, in 1960. And my impression is that he may very well not have been briefed on it until I was about to leave the Agency in early 1962.

Mr. Schwarz. But at that point you did brief him?

Mr. Bissell. I don't remember whether I personally

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they might eventually be so used.

Mr. Schwarz. Is that a supposition, or is it based upon any recollection?

Mr. Bissell. I would say it is a faint recollection. But I find it very difficult in this case to distinguish between an element of supposition and a dim recollection.

Let me come to what I seem to remember about this matter. There was, as you have already indicated, several discussions in the Special Group, and one or more at least in other very small groups with representation from State, the White House and the Agency. And I am clear -- I do recollect that the plans at that time contemplated the arming of obviously a relatively small group inside the Dominican Republic, that is, the provision of arms perhaps for a dozen or so people, but not for something like a Bay of Pigs invasion or a major geurilla activity.

Now, in discussing that kind of an operation, I am perfectly certain that everyone that participated in the discussion was clear that weapons so supplied might very well be used against Trujillo or other senior supporters of his.

Mr. Schwarz. For how many countries in your experience at the CIA has the US Government supplied arms to dissident groups within the country?

Mr. Bissell. Well, we have talked about two cases; Indonesia is another case during the time I was in the Agency,

or before I was DDP. Off hand I can't remember other cases, but there may have been some. Well, earlier before I was ever in the Agency, there was the case of Iran. And there was the reasonably well publicized case of Guatamala.

Mr. Schwarz. And the Iron Curtain countries?

Mr. Bissell. I think we have.

Mr. Schwarz. But what I am driving at, it is fairly common to supply arms to dissident elements in countries all over the world?

Mr. Bissell. Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Schwarz. Does taht also imply that there is an assassination contemplated or not?

Mr. Bissell. I would say definitely not, in most cases not. In a large scale operation like Guatamala there was no intention of any assassination. I think you would include it under that term.

The same is true in Iran of course -- the possibility that a chief of state would be killed.

The Chairman. But you would distinguish this matter from just supplying of arms to dissidents? In other words, there was an element of knowledge here that the arms were supplied for a purpose, and that that purpose might well be the assassination of Trujillo or other highly placed people in this Government, correct?

Mr. Bissell. The way I would prefer to state it, Senator,

I think is basically consistent with what you said. I would say that in the planning of this operation, and in the approval process, those involved would probably have given a higher probability to such use being made of the weapons than they would in some of the other operations that I have referred to.

Mr. Schwarz. However, just focusing on the Special Group as of the 12th of January, you can't tell from the minutes which state of mind existed, but you have a faint recollection that the more targeted state of mind existed as of the 12th of January?

Mr. Bissell. My impression is that as of that time, as I mentioned at the end of the testimony this morning, the reason that the State Department, and probably the Agency's representatives in the Special Group, favored this group was a pragmatic reason. It was to maintain and strengthen political ties with the dissidents.

Mr. Schwarz. The next matter of record that we should focus on is a memorandum of January 25, 1961, apparently reflecting a discussion of Project EMDEED. Was EMDEED the code for the overthrow of Trujillo?

Mr. Bissell. I suspect it was the code name for the project of support to the dissidents.

Mr. Schwarz. Do you remember the name EMSLEW?

I show you the memorandum of January 24, 1961 headed "Discussion of Project EMDEED." Does it appear to be a

and this record, which is a record we have obtained from the Agency, may be unfair to you. But do you not agree that on this record it appears that on the item of the passing of the weapons which were the weapons that were in fact used, it appears that the AGency elected to keep the State Department uninformed on that item?

Mr. Bissell. No, sir, it does not quite appear that way. It appears -- if I put these two together --

Mr. Schwarz. By these two you mean your cable of March 24 and the cable of May 1 relating to certain matters is not to be discussed with the State Department?

Mr. Bissell. Yes. The earlier cable of those refers to machine guns.

Mr. Schwarz. And to the pouching of revolvers?

Mr. Bissell. And the pouching of revolvers. And I believe that what eventually passed to the dissidents were three rifles, not the revolvers. And, therefore, neither of these cables in fact refers to the passage to the dissidents out of U.K.'s control.

This cable states the conditional willingness at some time in the future to pass machine guns. That permission was never granted and they were never passed.

It refers to pouching revolvers. And I don't know whether there was a record that those were ever passed, or even intended to be passed, to the dissidents. And it would